

IRAQI MUSEUM SPECIALISTS Attend Cultural Heritage Institute in the United States



The Cultural Heritage Institute

The Cultural Heritage Institute for Iraq is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), through a grant to the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. A select group of Iraqi museum specialists are studying in the United States for five weeks. The program includes lectures, practical training, and intensive interaction with U.S. experts and professionals in cultural and historical preservation and archaeology. The institute begins in Washington, D.C. and comprises visits to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia, Historic St. Mary's City in Maryland, Colonial Williamsburg, Santa Fe, and New York City. As a part of the institute, the professionals will work directly with Smithsonian Institution staff in a two-week practicum.

Overview of the group

The group is composed of 23 museum specialists, including 15 women and 8 men, who work at museums in Iraq, including the Iraq National Museum, the Museum of Najaf, the Museum of Diala, and the Babylon Museum. The participants, primarily between the ages of 25 and 35, hold degrees in Islamic Archaeology, Graphic Design, Cuneiform, Library Cataloging, and other fields, with specializations such as curator, conservation, education, exhibit design, and library science. They were nominated for participation in this program by cultural advisors to the Iraq Ministry of Culture and the Director of the Iraq National Museum.

Cultural preservation efforts in Iraq

The U.S. Department of State is committed to the preservation of Iraq's rich cultural heritage – representing 10,000 years of human development. ECA is dedicating \$3 million in public and private funds to support preservation efforts. ECA took the first steps toward making the Iraq National Museum functional again by providing computers, photo-

A QUICK SNAPSHOT

- 23 Iraqis museum specialists from Baghdad, Babylon, Najaf, and Diala
- A 5-week intensive study tour with American museum professionals, from March 1 - April 3
- Stays in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Santa Fe, and New York
- Connecting professionals with counterparts in their field to establish long-term professional relationships
- One of a series of exchanges with Iraq for Iraqi professionals and students

graphic equipment and office furnishings. In addition, ECA has 1) sponsored a Museum Assessment Mission resulting in support for infrastructure improvements such as security, climate control, and an IT system; 2) supported a Library of Congress needs assessment of the Iraq National Library; 3) committed to establishing an overseas research center in Baghdad for American based academic institutions to conduct research and collaborate with Iraqi scholars; 4) participated with the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraq State Board of Antiquities

and Heritage in the development of an Archaeological Site Protection plan to deter looting of sites throughout Iraq. Many of these undertakings are possible with the generous support of the Packard Humanities Institute.

ECA chairs an interagency group on cultural preservation in Iraq. The group includes grant-making agencies that are providing resources to institutions for documentation, restoration, research, training, education and other areas relevant to reconstituting the protection, study and enjoyment of Iraq's rich heritage.

Resuming exchange programs with Iraq

This group of Iraqis is one of many exchange programs ECA has initiated in recent months, bringing professionals and students to the United States, including athletes, musicians, physicians, lawyers, and professors. In December, the Iraq National Symphony Orchestra performed in Washington at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and in February, the first group of Fulbrighters from Iraq in 14 years came to the United States. The goal of these exchanges is for Iraqis to develop their skills in order to rebuild Iraqi institutions that suffered under Saddam Hussein, and also to increase mutual understanding between Iraq and the United States. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs conducts over 30,000 exchanges annually, bringing professionals and academics to the United States as well as sending Americans abroad for study and research.